

Community needed to help conserve resources

The last in a three-part series about environmental management at U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels

Small, daily changes add up in the long run

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Like any other habitat, the U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels community is a complex system; a system that many people, plants and animals use for different purposes, from troops who train at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center and the families who live on and off post, all the way to the endangered yellow-bellied toad that finds a safe haven inside the training area.

To help synchronize that activity, the garrison has a team of professionals at the Directorate of Public Works that strives to balance the needs of all those different populations.

Not only does the DPW oversee the environmental health of the training area's wildlife and monitor the use of hazardous materials to prevent potentially dangerous environmental accidents, it also is in charge of monitoring the use of natural resources such as water and energy.

DPW staff said they are constantly working to find ways to decrease unnecessary consumption to both limit the community's environmental impact and to maximize the efficiency of the garrison's financial resources.

According to garrison officials, wasted resources such as energy, heat, water and improperly disposed of waste bleed the garrison of funds that could be used for other community projects.

The DPW has been working on both low-cost, short-term solutions, many of which have already been implemented, and long-term solutions to conserve as much as possible. However, officials said they also need the help of the community to lower the use of natural resources to save money and create a cleaner environment.

Hohenfels' consumption figures are about average when compared to other garrisons but could be much better if each Soldier, unit, employee and family member worked to control his own usage, said DPW officials.

For example, in fiscal year 2009 the garrison spent a total of \$9 million on heating and electricity for on- and off-post facilities and living quarters, an unnecessarily high number, according to Paul Hlawatsch, chief of DPW's Mechanics Section, Utilities Branch, Operations and Maintenance Division

"If everybody would be aware and reduce their consumption we could do much better," said Hlawatsch.

He estimated that the community could reduce its energy consumption by up to 20 percent if each individual eliminated unnecessary usage.

Hlawatsch said though technological advances such as sensors that automatically turn off lights when a room is unoccupied have been a big help in the fight to save energy, technology alone will not sufficiently lower consumption. New technology

is also expensive and takes years to acquire and install, while simple personal responsibility could help lower costs now.

"The best technology in the world doesn't help us if we don't talk to the customer; he's the energy consumer and we need to be together on one team. It is very important for us to have everyone on our side," said Hlawatsch.

Hlawatsch said each person can help lower consumption by taking simple actions, including unplugging unused chargers and appliances, turning off lights when a room is unoccupied and using Energy Star compact fluorescent light bulbs instead of incandescent bulbs. (Authorized users of Self Help, located in Bldg. 742 across from the commissary, can trade in their used light bulbs for energy saving bulbs.)

Building coordinators throughout post can also be a big help by telling DPW when a building is not in use so energy and money are not wasted to heat and light the building.

Cooling and heating are other major sources of energy consumption and Hlawatsch said those numbers could also be easily lowered in the summer by using curtains and ventilation to keep rooms cool.

The use of permanently installed air conditioning, portable air conditioning units and space heaters, all of which use large amounts of energy, is prohibited by Army regulations in government and government leased quarters, according to Hans Motzer, DPW housing chief. Exceptions may be granted by either the DPW director or the garrison commander, depending on the request.

In the winter, customers should consider lowering the thermostat by a degree or two. According to Hlawatsch, reducing a room's temperature in the winter by just 2 degrees Fahrenheit could reduce the amount it costs to heat that room by 6 percent.

"Do you feel the difference between 72 degrees and 70 degrees? I don't think so, but changes like that make a big difference," said Hlawatsch, adding that those small things create big payoffs for the bottom line.

"We won't reduce their comfort, just reduce our energy consumption and that means more money we can spend on other services to increase their comfort. Army family housing projects could be initiated, it leads to a better environment — there are a lot of aspects," said Hlawatsch.

Water conservation

Water is another precious environmental resource the garrison is working to conserve.

In fiscal year 2009, on-post facilities and housing used almost 380,000 cubic meters of water, costing more than 250,000 euros, according to Harald Schramm, chief of DPW's Operations and Maintenance Division, Sanitation Division. The cost of water for off-post housing areas brings that total even higher.

"At Hohenfels we are lucky to have our own wells so we don't pay for the water itself, but it costs money



After removing Styrofoam and disposing of it separately, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Stone disposes of cardboard into the correct container at the Sort Facility, June 28. Properly sorting disposables is crucial to reducing waste and is the responsibility of each Soldier, family member, civilian and unit. For a detailed list of the recycling guidelines for your community, visit Self Help, Building 742.

to pump it, filter it and get it where it needs to go," said Schramm.

Schramm said customers can help reduce their consumption by reducing the amount they use to wash their personal vehicles, not washing dishes under running water, taking a shower instead of a bath and implementing other small daily changes.

Schramm also said customers should remember that every contribution matters. There are many different reasons people need to consume water, whether it is a unit that needs to wash its tanks or a family that needs to wash laundry, but every single ounce of water saved during those activities adds up quickly.

"All missions need to be accomplished; washing tanks, clothes, your car. The question is not 'does it need done' but 'did I do everything I can to save as much as possible.' If we're not all working on saving together it won't get better," said Schramm.

In addition to increasing awareness about how to conserve water, Schramm said he wishes he could increase awareness among the community about how important it is to properly sort trash.

Schramm said the 4,100 metric tons of waste the garrison recycled in fiscal year 2009, almost 70 percent of the total 6,000 tons of waste produced, is a good number, but like all others, could be better.

The garrison, or the town in the case of off-post housing, is responsible for picking up trash, but it is up to individuals to sort their own recycling

and ensure it reaches the appropriate facility, said Schramm. That includes all units and offices on-post.

"This is not just something we need to do for the environment (to limit how much trash ends up in landfills), but it is also mandated. On and off post, if you don't sort your trash correctly it won't be picked up. Off post you can even be fined," said Schramm.

Part of cutting down on waste includes preventing it in the first place. Schramm said he encourages people to think about reusing items instead of buying new and reducing the amount of waste by using multiple-use products instead of disposable, such as using a cloth towel instead of paper towels or bringing your own cloth grocery bags to the store instead of wasting new plastic ones each time.

At Army and Air Force Exchange Service facilities, customers now receive five cents off their purchase when they bring their own bags.

For disposing trash, Schramm said customers must follow the sorting guidelines for their specific county as each one has slightly different requirements. Self Help has handouts detailing each county's sorting requirements and can also provide customers with the trash pickup schedule for their housing area or community.

Both Schramm and Hlawatsch said convincing customers to conserve natural resources can be difficult because there is little monetary incentive for the customer when the Army is picking up the tab. However,



Chris Koivisto lowers the blinds in his office to block sunlight and keep the room cool on a warm afternoon. Cooling and heating tasks use energy and money that could be used for other garrison projects. Use simple measures like keeping windows open in the morning and lowering blinds in the afternoon to help reduce your energy needs.

the garrison needs every customer's help to rein in costs and promote a clean environment.

"One benefit leads to the other and our awareness of keeping the earth in a good environmental condition is a responsibility we have for ourselves and for our children as well," said Hlawatsch. "If you use your energy wisely everybody is a winner, and wouldn't it be a great feeling when that leads to reduced consumption, which reduces costs and leads to a better environment," said Hlawatsch.

Conserving our natural resources

Heat and air conditioning

- Building coordinators should update/limit the building's heating or cooling schedule to the minimum need of the facility mission and inform DPW.
- Units should report unoccupied facilities to DPW for reduction or shut down of heating or cooling.
- During heating or cooling season, keeps doors and windows permanently closed.
- Turn off radiators or cooling units when rooms are unused or unoccupied.
- Don't operate portable air conditioning units, which are prohibited by Army regulations in government and government leased quarters.
- Keep windows open in the morning and blinds drawn in the

daytime to cool rooms.

Electricity

- Don't operate electrical space heaters, which are prohibited by Army regulation in government and government leased quarters.
- Units should report unoccupied facilities to DPW for shut down of lighting.
- Turn off interior lights when rooms or areas are unused or unoccupied.
- Turn off manual exterior lights during daytime and when not needed.
- Turn off unused electronic devices such as computers, monitors, televisions and domestic appliances. Avoid electrical consumption due to standby mode.
- Unplug unused electrical devices such as refrigerators and freezers.

- Use compact fluorescent light bulbs instead of incandescent bulbs.

Water

- Take a shower instead of a bath.
- Keep the faucet closed when brushing your teeth, washing your face or shaving.
- Make sure to repair defective faucets or defective flush tanks immediately.
- Do not wash dishes under running water.
- Always use the saving modes of dishwashers and clothes washers and dryers.
- Start washers, dryers and dishwashers only when completely loaded.
- Water plants only with collected rainwater.
- Do not water your lawn (after a

longer drought period, the grass will green again after only a few days of rain).

- Water plants only in the evening. Too much water evaporates during the day.
- Waive frequent car washing and wash cars only at designated wash facilities. Do not use hot water for car washing.

Recycling reminders:

- Refuse avoidance is always the most effective way to decrease waste. Bring your own bags to the store, and use reusable instead of disposable bottles.
- Before tossing it in the trash, try to find another use for it. Turn unbearable clothing into cleaning rags; use old food containers for storage;

- and keep newspapers for packing material.
- Separate clean paper (newspapers, cereal boxes, office paper), biowaste (food scraps, coffee grounds), recyclable materials (metal cans, plastics) and glass (separated by color in some counties) from regular trash (dirty recyclables that cannot be washed, diapers, personal hygiene items, crystal, porcelain, pottery).
- Bring household hazardous waste to either the sort facility or Self Help. This includes light bulbs, aerosol cans, freezers, cleaner, cooking grease/oil, polish, paint, batteries, turpentine and varnish.
- For a more detailed list of recycling guidelines, visit Self Help in Bldg. 742.